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565 any one family seldom remained constant for more than two or three generations. These conditions accounted for the lack of a permanent ruling caste in China. There are definite ideals in traditional Chinese culture which conditioned the upward and downward mobility of the people within the social hierarchy.

B. Social Mobility

565 The family ideal. Large families, especially
● 428 of the extended type, were the ideal in China.⁴
596 However, in practice, the ideal was limited by economic means. Primogeniture in China had been done away with long before the Manchu (Ch'ing) Dynasty (1644-1912). Land was divided equally among sons. After successive divisions, individual holdings became infinitesimally small. This contributed to the decline of the economic status of even the wealthiest families and particularly when land was the sole source of income.⁵ On the

4. Consult chapter on Family in this handbook.

5. "In the matter of inheritance, the general pattern observed for poor agriculturalists holds very well for the merchant group. Just as at the death of a farmer, there is a sharing of the property. In the agricultural situation, however, there seems to be greater fragmentation of the legacy, each son working his share more or less independently and with a minimum of combination. In the merchant situation there is somewhat more cohesion among heirs, who often work the inherited enterprise as partners." Morton H. Fried, Fabric of Chinese Society, New York, Praeger, 1953, p. 52.

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565 other hand, because of the existence of extended
596 families and the clan structure, less fortunate
428 members of these groups might be helped by
relatives to gain a living or an education. A sub-
stantial amount of land was usually allotted to
the communal family or clan for religious, edu-
cational, or charity purposes by illustrious mem-
bers of the family or clan. Nepotism was simply
a projection of the family ideal of mutual help
among the members. Clan nepotism often account-
ed for a man's rise on the social and economic
ladder. This practice contributed to the upward
movement of poorer segments of the population
who otherwise might never have advanced socially
and economically in a relatively short period of
time.

183 The scholar ideal. Learning was much es-
565 teemed, especially when combined with wealth.
555 The prestige of the wealthy was never complete
until their wealth was adorned with culture. In-
dicative of the respect all Chinese had for learn-
ing was the popular saying: "Although your children
may be of low intelligence, you as parents should
make them study the Classics."⁶ The emphasis

6. This stress on learning and cultivation
of the Chinese was studied by Max Weber. In
his Religion of China, Weber goes so far as to
conclude that this emphasis caused the lack of
capital accumulation necessary for the develop-
ment of modern capitalism in China. While this
analysis may be oversimple, it indicates that the
traditional supremacy of officialdom over the
merchant groups may have impeded the rise of
a system of negotiable property rights, protected
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